

POLS 3000

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Baldwin Hall 301

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INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

“Political theory [is] a kind of meeting ground of . . . philosophers who turned to politics out of despair about the unbearable of certain historical experiences. Such was the case of Plato. . . . And we find the statesmen and great men of action who again out of despair turn to philosophy. . . . Such was the case of Machiavelli. . . . And we find finally the philosopher who out of despair of philosophy turns to politics. This is the case of Marx . . . The result in all cases is political theory.”

—*Hannah Arendt*

“The basic question of political theory could be put this way: what is going on? What is really happening in society? We need to ask this question because the ordinary commonsense understanding of what is going on is inadequate. And the answers offered frequently are surprising, strange, even shocking for ordinary understanding.”

—*Charles Taylor*

Political theory is both a specialized academic field of study within political science geared toward understanding politics through the study of the history of political thought, and a cognitive enterprise that we all engage in whenever we reflect on the possibilities and limits of our social and political life. As a field of study, political theory is at the core of an education in political science, for the only way to think intelligently about politics is to learn to think one’s way through the works of the great writers on the subject and to learn to argue with them. The principal aim of this course is thus to offer a detailed examination of some of the canonical texts of the Western tradition of political thought. The course begins with Plato’s *Apology* and *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*, and their accounts of political community, justice, ruling, citizenship, and slavery. The course then engages Niccolò Machiavelli’s conception of grand politics in *The Prince*. After Machiavelli we will turn our attention to an examination of modern political thought by engaging Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* (on capitalism, socialism, communism, and social revolution) and John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*. The course concludes with a study of Hannah Arendt’s “On Violence,” “Lying in Politics,” and her controversial book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.

We will approach these books, essays, and pamphlets with the three-fold aim of entering into the thought-world of the text in order to understand the aims of its author on his or her own terms, to feel the force of the problems of politics that the author took himself or herself to be confronting, as well as the promise (and difficulties) of his or her strategies for confronting them. Once we have a sense of what an author is doing through an intense study of his or her work, we will be in a better position to appreciate the material as a cognitive resource by which we can arm ourselves with concepts and perspectives to help us to think clearly, critically, and creatively about difficult questions of social and political life. Although readers have interpreted and criticized these great works for years, each generation of readers who comes to them has the opportunity to make them new by finding fresh meanings, new possibilities, new perspectives, and new ideas in them. These works have enriched the world we live in, and by becoming familiar with them we will be able to acquire a richer understanding of who we are and what we are doing.

Primary texts for study:

The following books are **required** and available in the campus bookstore for purchase:
(Texts marked * will be made available on eLC and you do not need to purchase them.)

- *Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 3rd edition, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. J. M. Cooper (Hackett)
- Plato, *Republic*, 2nd edition, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *Politics*, a new translation by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Constantine (Modern Library)
- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and other writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge)
- *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac (Yale)
- Hannah Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (Harvest)
- Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Penguin Classics)

NOTE: Buy or rent these physical books, new or used, at the campus bookstore or order them online. You may not use a different edition or translation of these books. You may not use electronic editions either (I want you to learn how to interact with books, not your devices). My role in this class is to help you learn, and I cannot do that if you do not have the same books that I have because you will literally be on the wrong page reading the wrong words and you will not be able to follow my lectures or discuss the books with your classmates.

Class objectives:

- 1) Develop skills of careful and thoughtful reading of political thought.
- 2) Develop the historical knowledge and historical sense necessary for an adequate understanding of political life.
- 3) Develop the ability to think systematically, analytically, creatively, and critically about political ideas, practices, and problems.
- 4) Consider how the problems, concepts and arguments examined might be of significance today and challenge our own way of thinking about politics.

Assignments:

Detailed directions for each assignment will be posted on eLC. You can expect meaningful feedback on assignments within two weeks of their due date.

| <u>Due Date – Assignment</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|---|---------------|
| Aug. 23 – <i>Apology</i> reading assignment | 10 |
| Aug. 30 – <i>Republic</i> II reading assignment | 10 |
| Sept. 15 – <i>Republic</i> VII reading assignment | 10 |
| Sept. 29 – <i>Politics</i> quiz | 10 |
| Oct. 11 – <i>The Prince</i> paper | 10 |
| Oct. 18 – <i>On Liberty</i> paper | 10 |
| Oct. 25 – <i>Subjection of Women</i> reading assignment | 10 |
| Nov. 5 – <i>Communist Manifesto</i> reading assignment | 10 |
| Nov. 15 – <i>On Violence</i> quiz | 10 |
| Nov. 22 – <i>Lying in Politics</i> quiz | 10 |
| Dec. 6 – <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> paper | 10 |

Grading:

At the end of the semester **I will drop your lowest grade**. So your final point total (out of 100) will be determined by adding up your 10 highest grades from the 11 assignments in this class.

Grading scale: A >93 A- 90-93 B+ 87-90 B 83-87 B- 80-83 C+ 77-80 C 73-77 C- 70-73.

Late assignments:

It is important to manage your time effectively. Assignments are due no later than 10:20 a.m. (i.e., the beginning of class) on the due date. I will give you further instructions about how to turn them in (via eLC, in person, or some other way). No late assignments will be accepted unless you have received express written permission (i.e., an email) from me giving you an extension of time on the assignment. I will grant extensions for a reasonable amount of time (usually a few days) for legitimate reasons.

Meme competition:

I make memes about the thinkers we read in this class and use them in my PowerPoint slides. I invite you to make funny, original memes too. You should send them to me by email *any time* during the semester. You can submit as many memes as you want. I may use them in class. In any case, I will present all submissions at our last class meeting. The winner(s) of the friendly competition will be determined by popular vote and will get two extra credit points.

Extra credit:

In addition to the meme competition, you all have the opportunity to earn extra credit in our last class session on **December 6**. You will be given an exam of about 40 questions that require short answers to some basic matters of 'fact' that pertain to the study of the various theorists and texts read in this course. We will grade this exam together in class. A good score on this exam will boost your final grade in the course; but a not so good score will not hurt you.

Course format and attendance:

This is a text-based lecture course. Given the number of students in the course and setup of the classroom, class time will be devoted to lectures. I expect you to come to class on time, regularly, and to listen and take notes. I also expect you to have read the assigned material for each session closely and carefully *before* coming to class and to be prepared to participate during breaks in the lectures for questions, discussion, the airing of different points of view, and so on. If for some reason you have to arrive late or must leave early, tell me *before* the moment in question and then arrive/depart as unobtrusively as possible. (If you think this will become habitual, don't take the class).

Reading:

It is essential to keep up with the reading. The reading is to be completed by the date listed on the syllabus. ****Always bring the assigned reading to class.**** The texts for this class are not "quick reads"; nor can you simply read the first few pages or glance over their paragraphs quickly to catch their leading ideas. You must reserve enough time to read the assigned texts closely and carefully and completely.

Class conduct:

The classroom is a learning environment first and foremost, and everyone is responsible for making certain that the classroom remains an environment conducive to learning. Therefore it should not be contaminated with food, and it must be kept free from distractions and disruptions by laptops, cell phones, and other electronic modes of communication and entertainment. Therefore, laptop use during class is banned and all phones should be put away. My experience is that phone and computer use during class is more likely to inhibit understanding than to improve it.

Cultural sensitivity:

Our classroom environment should be mutually respectful and inclusive of all students. The classroom should be an environment with no discrimination, where everyone is comfortable and at liberty to contribute to, and benefit from, the entire learning experience. Any suggestions to improve class interactions or any concerns should be brought to my attention.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor.

Academic honesty:

The University's Academic Honesty Policy ("A Culture of Honesty," available at <http://honesty.uga.edu/index.html>) defines scholastic honesty as "the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attributed." Academic honesty is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, will result in disciplinary action.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

- Wednesday, August 18 – Syllabus Day
- Friday, August 20 – Learn Names
- Monday, August 23 – Read Plato’s *Apology* (pp. 20-42)
****Apology reading exercise due****
- Wednesday, August 25 – Review or reread Plato’s *Apology* (pp. 20-42)
- Friday, August 27 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book I (pp. 1-31)
- Monday, August 30 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book II (pp. 32-59)
****Republic II reading exercise due****
- Wednesday, September 1 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book III (pp. 60-93)
- Friday, September 3 – No reading assignment.
- Monday, September 6 – NO CLASS (Labor Day Holiday)
- Wednesday, September 8 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book IV (pp. 94-121)
- Friday, September 10 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book V (pp. 122-156)
- Monday, September 13 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book VI (pp. 157-185)
- Wednesday, September 15 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book VII (pp. 186-212)
****Republic VII reading exercise due****
- Friday, September 17 – Introduction to Aristotle. No reading assignment.
- Monday, September 20 – Read Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book I (pp. 2-21)
- Wednesday, September 22 – Read, reread, or review Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book I (pp. 2-21)
- Friday, September 24 – Read Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book II (pp. 22-51)
- Monday, September 27 – Read Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book III (pp. 52-82)
- Wednesday, September 29 – ****In-class quiz on Aristotle’s Politics****
- Friday, October 1 – NO CLASS. Reading Day: Start reading Machiavelli’s *Prince* (pp. 3-123)
- Monday, October 4 – Introduction to Niccolò Machiavelli
- Wednesday, October 6 – Finish reading Machiavelli’s *Prince* (pp. 3-123)
- Friday, October 8 – In honor of Machiavelli I will bring coffee, *cantucci*, and we’ll watch a video
- Monday, October 11 – Introduction to J. S. Mill
****The Prince paper due****
- Wednesday, October 13 – Read Mill’s *On Liberty*, ch. 1 (pp. 5-18)
- Friday, October 15 – Read Mill’s *On Liberty*, ch. 2 (pp. 19-55)
- Monday, October 18 – Read Mill’s *On Liberty*, ch. 3 (pp. 56-74)
****On Liberty paper due****
- Wednesday, October 20 – Read Mill’s *Subjection of Women*, ch. 1 (pp. 119-145)
- Friday, October 22 – Read Mill’s *Subjection of Women*, ch. 2 (pp. 146-165)

Monday, October 25 – Read Mill’s *Subjection of Women*, ch. 3 (pp. 166-194)
****Subjection of Women reading exercise due****

Wednesday, October 27 – Introduction to Karl Marx (BBC video)

Friday, October 29 – NO CLASS

Monday, November 1 – Read part I of *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 73-84)

Wednesday, November 3 – Read part II of *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 84-92)

Friday, November 5 – Read parts III and IV of *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 92-102)
****Communist Manifesto reading assignment due****

Monday, November 8 – Introduction to Hannah Arendt.

Read part I of Arendt’s *On Violence* (pp. 105-133)

Wednesday, November 10 – Read part II of Arendt’s *On Violence* (pp. 134-155)

Friday, November 12 – Read part III of Arendt’s *On Violence* (pp. 156-184)

Monday, November 15 – ****In-class quiz on Arendt’s On Violence****

Wednesday, November 17 – Read Arendt’s *Lying in Politics* (pp. 3-47)

Friday, November 19 – No new reading assignment.

Monday, November 22 – ****In-class quiz on Arendt’s Lying in Politics****

Start reading Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (pp. 3-298)

Wednesday, November 24 – NO CLASS

Friday, November 26 – NO CLASS

Monday, November 29 – Start watching *Hannah Arendt*, a film by Margarethe von Trotta

Wednesday, December 1 – Finish watching *Hannah Arendt*, a film by Margarethe von Trotta

Friday, December 3 – Finish reading Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (pp. 3-298)

Monday, December 6 – In-class extra credit factoid quiz and meme competition results
****Eichmann in Jerusalem paper due****